

MOROCCO (NOVEMBER, 2013)

PART II - RABAT TO FES & FES



We stopped at several places on the way to Fes, one being this home in the country side.

Cooking Lesson...

Our host cooked us a snack out of this kitchen, giving us a Cooking lesson of sorts.



Portrait Of Our Teacher and Host...

Our teacher graciously posed, allowed us to wander around her place of several buildings and answered questions translated by our guide Mustapha.



Our Primary Culinary Student, Teacher and Grounds Keeper (The Cat)...

Some of us learned more than others, myself being the latter.



Snails and Olive Oil...

Road side stands like this were plentiful along the highway to Fes,



Meknes...



We stopped for lunch in Meknes. The weather was beginning to improve and we saw some of our first significant sun. It was still pretty cool though, none of that Sahara heat was getting this far west as I was hoping. I thought it was just the Atlas Mountains stopping it, but as it turn out there was not that much heat out in the Sahara in the first place.

Traditional Tea Being Served...



A Typical Meknes Morning
Situation Room (Local Cafe)

A lot more colorful than our local Morning
Situation Room at Cups Espresso back in
Poulsbo.



Local Metal Artist / Craftsman

After lunch we visited a local shop where
this man was demonstrating this technique
of metal work. He pounds a thin silver
thread into the surface of the dish (or other
metal objects) to create a design.

A Stop At Volubilis...



Volubilis is a partly excavated Roman city. Built in a fertile agricultural area, it was developed from the 3rd century BCE onwards as a Phoenician (and later Carthaginian) settlement. It grew rapidly under Roman rule from the 1st century CE onwards and expanded to cover about 40 hectares (100 acres) with a 2.6 km (1.6 mi) circuit of walls. The city gained a number of major public buildings in the 2nd century, including a basilica, temple and triumphal arch. Its prosperity, which was derived principally from olive growing, prompted the construction of many fine town-houses with large mosaic floors.

The town fell to local tribesmen around 285 and was never retaken by Rome because of its remoteness and indefensibility on the south-western border of the Roman Empire. It continued to be inhabited for at least another 700 years, first as a Latinised Christian community, then as an early Islamic settlement. In the late 8th century it became the seat of Idris ibn Abdallah, the founder of the Idrisid dynasty and the state of Morocco. By the 11th century Volubilis had been abandoned after the seat of power was relocated to Fes. Much of the local population was transferred to the new town of Moulay Idriss Zerhoun, about 5 km (3.1 mi) from Volubilis.

The ruins remained substantially intact until they were devastated by an earthquake in the mid-18th century and subsequently looted by Moroccan rulers seeking stone for building Meknes. It was not until the latter part of the 19th century that the site was definitively identified as that of the ancient city of Volubilis. During and after the period of French rule over Morocco, about half of the site was excavated, revealing many fine mosaics, and some of the more prominent public buildings and high-status houses were restored or reconstructed. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, listed for being "an exceptionally well preserved example of a large Roman colonial town on the fringes of the Empire".



After wandering around Volubilis for a while, the Rabat weather started to catch up to us. While the weather added to the atmosphere of the couple of images showing the fertile country side around Volubilis, we soon headed on down the road towards Fes, chased by the weather all the way.



FES



Overview of Fes el-Bali (old Fes)

The grand view of Morocco's oldest imperial city and it's 9,000 plus streets, lanes, alleys and passages beckoning to swallow you and never spit you out!



The view of Fes below, brought a bit closer by a telephoto lens, still does not show any escape from the Fes labyrinth.



Tajine, Tajine, Tajine, Tajine....

We went to several shops where they had the artisans doing work... This potter is making a top (thrown upside down) for the ever so popular ceramic cooking pot called a tajine. A tajine as a food is a historically Berber dish from North Africa that is named after the type of earthenware pot in which it is cooked, a tajine.

The traditional method of cooking with a tajine is to place the tajine over coals. The traditional tajine pot is formed entirely of a natural clay, which is sometimes painted or glazed. It consists of two parts: a base unit that is flat and circular with low sides and a large cone- or dome-shaped cover that sits on the base during cooking, (which is what this artisan is throwing on a kick wheel, again, upside down). The cover is designed to promote the return of all condensation to the bottom. Tajines can also be cooked in a conventional oven or on a stove top.

Moroccan tajine dishes are slow-cooked savory stews, typically made with sliced meat, poultry, or fish together with vegetables or fruit. Spices, nuts, and dried fruits are also used. Common spices include ginger, cumin, turmeric, cinnamon, and saffron. Paprika and chili are used in vegetable tajine. The sweet and sour combination is common in tajine dishes like lamb with dates and spices. Tajines are served with couscous or bread.

The Watcher Was Always Being Watched....

Once one had entered into the compact world it was teeming with people and personal zones were non existent.

Because the domed or cone-shaped lid of the tajine pot traps steam and returns the condensed liquid to the pot, a minimal amount of water is needed to cook meats and vegetables. This method of cooking is very practical in areas here water supplies are limited or where public water is not yet available.

For most meals on this trip we had tajine du jour...





The Universal Sign For Photographs For Money...

You had to be beware of the local UPS delivery mules and attune to the warning cry of “*Barek!*” (look out!)...

There was no verbal cry out for “*Photographs For Money*”, but there is a clear and internationally recognized hand signal.

There were also many verbal warnings of “*No Photographs!*” as this society is still very reserved in that manner, and I readily complied when served the warning.



This parked UPS delivery mule was not considered as photogenic as the prior one. The only one looking for tips for photographs was the cat.

The following images are of people painting designs on already bisque fired ceramics. Bisque firing is the first of two firings / bakings of most ceramics. After the bisque firing, the colored glazes are applied and the piece fired again to fix the glaze to the ceramic piece.



Tile Making...

This artisan is using one of the many techniques in making tiles. After the tile has been fired twice (the first the bisque firing and the second time after applying the glaze), the artisan is delicately chipping away the glazed surface of the tile with what seems an overly large and unwieldy chisel for the task, in order to reveal the bare tile below, and alas, creating a pattern. From the rather large pile of broken tiles and shards around his work space, I surmised that this technique was wrought with failure.

But given the wage he probably gets and the length of time this shop appeared to have been around, an economically viable process none the less.



I am not sure what the lid this artisan is working on was for. We had some large communal non-tajine prepared food that was served with lids in the general size, but I do not remember the name.



Artisan's Workshop...

This was very typical of the small workshops located throughout Fes.

The Famous Fes Tannery...

This is the famous Fes tannery, nestled in the middle of the Fes medina labyrinth. If walking through the Fes medina doesn't put you in a time warp enough, walking out onto this scene from the roof tops and balcony above it, moves the time machine even further back.

An incredible primal scene and smell of animal skins, pigeon guano, animal urine and who knows what else used in the tanning process here.

A little research before this trip and I surmised that the mint sprigs they gave people to place under their noses to mask the smell was not up to the task of a nose the size of mine or its very keen sense of smell. Smearing my mustache with a liberal amount of the Vicks VapoRub I had packed all the way to Morocco from home specifically for this moment, allowed me the fortitude to stand there and photograph with my hands free of my nose.





Eventually, all that becomes
all this and much more....

The leather shop owner, our guide and the universal sign for *Photographs For Money...*



Textiles are another artisan product in the Fes markets...



Is There An Exit From Fes?

Eventually we were guided out of the Fes medina labyrinth, but not before I considered finding my own way out.

I thought this looked like an interesting possibility, or at least one that would lead to some more Fes adventures. My idea was vetoed by Wendy's single vote though. I still think about this path. It reminds me of some blues lyrics I am fond of; *"I know right from wrong, I just don't know which one is right for me all the time..."*

Some day I'll have to get the writing above those doors translated...



.END of this issue of the *Flying Pig Adventures*